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OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

September 15, 2006

***Via Facsimile (202-228-3796) and  
U. S. Mail***

The Honorable Tom Coburn, MD  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Federal  
Financial Management, Government  
Information and International Security  
340 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Coburn:

In response to your recent inquiry, we appreciate the opportunity to provide information on federal research funding at Mercer University. We understand and share your commitment to ensuring that federal appropriations serve the public interest and support scientific research and other educational initiatives in an efficient and effective manner.

The majority of federal funding received by Mercer from 2000 to the present has come from negotiated or competitively awarded contracts for services to the government, or research grants from the National Institutes of Health and other federal agencies to the School of Medicine and the College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences. During fiscal year 2006, for example, Mercer received \$12,394,554 in funds from the federal government in the arena of research, government services, and the improvement or expansion of educational services. Of that total, the Mercer Engineering Research Center (MERC) received \$10,994,196 in federal contracts with the Department of Defense, primarily in support of national security and defense programs at the Warner Robins Air Logistics Center (WR-ALC) near our campus. \$1,400,358 in federal grants received by Mercer in support of medical and pharmaceutical research were awarded pursuant to a competitive, peer-review process.

In contrast, a very small portion of the federal support received by Mercer has been in the form of congressionally-directed appropriations. During the period from 2000 to the present, only three projects at Mercer have been wholly or partially funded through direct federal appropriations. With specific reference to these three projects, we are pleased to provide the following information in response to the questions contained in your letter of July 27, 2006.

***1) Please provide a list of all appropriations received by your institution from the year 2000 to present, and the amount of assistance received.***

- (a) National Highway Transportation and Safety Administration School Bus Safety Study

FY01	Department of Transportation	\$250,000
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- (b) National Highway Transportation and Safety Administration Tire Study

FY03	Department of Transportation	\$368,624
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- (c) Mercer University Critical Personnel Development Program

FY03	VA HUD – EDI SP Grant	\$202,500
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FY04	Dept of Education FIPSE	\$200,000
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FY04	Dept of Energy BER	\$750,000
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FY05	Dept of Education FIPSE	\$250,000
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FY06	Dept of Energy BER	\$750,000
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FY06	Veterans Administration	\$200,000
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***2) Please provide a summary of the specific objectives or goals set to be achieved by any entity, program, project or service associated with an appropriation at your institution, and, for each appropriation, a list of accomplishments that can be attributed to the project, entity, program or service (e.g. published peer-reviewed research, etc., depending on the nature of the earmarks your institution has received).***

**NHTSA School Bus Safety Study**

The objective of this study by the Mercer Engineering Research Center (MERC) was to evaluate the occupant-protection effects of various amounts and types of padding applied to interior school bus side walls. MERC developed finite element computer models to simulate the bus and occupant configuration, and then used finite element software to analyze the effects of an occupant impacting unpadded and padded side walls. Several types and thicknesses of padding were analyzed, and head impact and pelvic injury criteria were calculated for both unpadded and padded side walls. Full scale school bus testing was performed to provide supplemental input and validation of the analyses.

MERC delivered a final report and a briefing to NHTSA which summarized the models developed, the results of the analyses, and the testing performed. MERC also provided recommendations of the padding types and thicknesses which were most effective in preventing head and pelvic injuries.

### NHTSA Tire Study

In late 2000, the U.S. House of Representatives' Committee on Energy and Commerce conducted an inquiry into fatalities and injuries resulting from tread separation failures of various tires. NHTSA received a mandate to update the 30-plus year old passenger vehicle and light truck tire safety standards.

The objective of the NHTSA Tire Safety Study was to identify tire-aging criteria to determine what effects tire age, condition driven, load, and inflation pressure had on tire durability and safety. The ultimate goal for NHTSA was to take these effects into consideration in developing better test specifications. To this end, NHTSA awarded a \$368,625 Tire Safety Study contract to the Mercer Engineering Research Center.

Early in the program, MERC determined that a critical component of the Study was the assessment of the effect of the aging process on the chemical and mechanical properties of the tires. Not having the facilities and equipment for artificially aging the tires, MERC consulted with the NHTSA and decided that it was in the best interest of the program for MERC to subcontract this effort to companies who specialize in tire testing. The subcontract amount was \$280,470.

The testing was performed successfully pursuant to the subcontract. MERC analyzed the data from this testing and provided a report to NHTSA summarizing the results

### Critical Personnel Development Program

Mercer University's campus in Macon, Georgia is located 20 miles from Warner Robins Air Logistics Center (WR-ALC), Robins Air Force Base (RAFB). As the only educational institution partnered with the WR-ALC, Mercer University is the single largest provider of engineers to Robins Air Force Base.

Warner Robins Air Logistics Center and regional private aerospace industries have a continuing need for engineers trained in a variety of aerospace-related disciplines. Based on projected workload and known attrition, the *WR-ALC Workforce Shaping Study* documented a specific requirement to hire 85 engineers per year for a total of 425 scientists and engineers during the next five years. To help meet this requirement, WR-ALC and Mercer University implemented a comprehensive Educational Partnership Agreement (in accordance with Title 10, United States Code, Section 2194) for the purpose of encouraging and enhancing study in scientific disciplines.

Pursuant to this Agreement, the Critical Personnel Development Program (CPDP) was initiated in order to address the compelling need for a continuous source of skilled engineers to meet evolving technical challenges. The CPDP is specifically tailored to assure that Mercer University maintains the academic expertise and research capability to respond to the evolving demands of the aerospace support industry. In close cooperation with WR-ALC, Mercer provides student interns for part-time and cooperative education positions while pursuing degrees vital to the Air Logistics Center mission. Working with the ALC Directorates, student

design projects and master's theses relevant to Air Force missions are identified and implemented. As a proactive partner, Mercer University actively encourages students to tailor their studies to meet engineering challenges and job opportunities at WR-ALC.

The centerpiece of the Critical Personnel Development Program (CPDP) is the Science and Engineering Building currently under construction on the Macon campus. This \$12 million facility is specifically designed to provide academic training and laboratory research in support of WR-ALC mission requirements, and to create regional economic development opportunities. As itemized above, Mercer has received a total of approximately \$2.3 million in appropriated federal funds for this project, which the University has matched with \$10 million in private funds from foundations and individuals. Construction of the Science and Engineering Building began in December 2005 and will be completed in April 2007.

***3) How does your institution set a measure for standards to achieve quality and outcomes for entities, programs, projects, or services receiving assistance through earmarks or appropriations?***

Mercer University conducts an ongoing process of assessment of program outcomes and quality. The assessment process provides information on the performance of curriculum, learning processes, and/or services. Assessment plans and results are reviewed twice each academic year by members of the University Assessment Council, which in turn provides guidance on how to strengthen the programs.

***4) Does your institution have a stated policy regarding Congressional earmarks or appropriations (if so, please describe)? Does your institution have a policy regarding partnering in research projects with other universities who may have a differing policy?***

Given the limited amount of congressionally-directed appropriations that are sought or received by the University, Mercer does not have a stated policy regarding earmarks or appropriations, nor do we have a stated policy regarding partnering in research projects with other universities.

***5) Has your institution considered hiring a lobbyist to assist your institution in attaining familiarity with the opportunities that may exist to obtain Federal funds for research – such as the earmarking process?***

Mercer does employ outside consultants who assist in identifying opportunities for contracts for services with the federal government.

***6) In conclusion, do you find Congressionally earmarked funds to have contributed in a substantive way to your academic institution?***

While relatively small in proportion to the total federal support received by Mercer, congressionally-directed appropriations have increased the University's ability to serve the academic needs of our students and to meet critical educational requirements of both industry and the United States military in the community we serve.

We are available to discuss these matters in greater depth with you and your staff, in conjunction with members of our Georgia delegation. Thank you for your interest in the work and accomplishments of Mercer University.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. D. Underwood', written in a cursive style.

William D. Underwood  
President